

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-10

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AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

S E C R E T BANGKOK 19326

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: GENERAL KRIT AS DE GAULLE?

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION BANGKOK FM SONGKHLA DEC 11 RPTD
FOR YOUR INFO:

SONGKHLA 043

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT TH

SUBJ: GENERAL KRIT AS DE GAULLE?

1. AT DINNER DECEMBER 9 IN HONOR OF RTA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
KRIT SIWARA AT HAAD YAI RTA 5TH REGIMENT I HAD CANDID TALK
WITH MAJ. GEN. SAN CHITBATIMA, RTA MILITARY COMMANDER FOR
THE SOUTH. IN ANSWER TO RATHER INNOCUOUS QUESTION ABOUT WHAT
KRIT WOULD DO WHEN HE RETIRES NEXT YEAR, SAN ANSWERED, "HE
LIKES POLITICS". WOULD KRIT FORM A POLITICAL PARTY? "HE
ALREADY HAS ONE. OTHER PEOPLE ARE RUNNING IT FOR HIM".

2. SAN'S SCENARIO: JANUARY 1975 ELECTIONS ARE INCONCLUSIVE, AND
EVENTUALLY A WEAK COALITION REGIME BEGINS TO GOVERN. PROBLEMS
ARE TOO GREAT, HOWEVER, AND REGIME IS UNABLE TO TAKE STRONG
STAND ON INFLATION, LABOR UNREST, STUDENTS, ETC. MILITARY
LOOKS ON BENIGNLY -- "WE INTEND TO PLAY BY THE RULES" (MEANING

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NO COUPS) -- BUT MAINTAINS MINIMAL LAW AND ORDER. MASS OF

POLITICAL PARTIES BEGINS TO COALESCE IN MID-SUMMER WITH ONE FACTION FAVORING ACCESSION BY KRIT (MOST LIKELY EX-GOVERNMENT MP'S NOW SPREAD OVER SEVERAL PARTIES). BY AUGUST-SEPTEMBER PUBLIC IS DISSATISFIED BY LACK OF STRONG LEADERSHIP AND YEARNS FOR MAN ON WHITE HORSE. OCTOBER 1 SEES KRIT RETIRE AND ANNOUNCE A LA DE GAULLE THAT HE WILL BE AVAILABLE TO RUN FOR PRIME MINISTER IF NATION NEEDS HIM. NEW ELECTIONS CALLED FOR, WHICH KRIT EASILY WINS, AND THAI-STYLE FOURTH REPUBLIC DISAPPEARS.

COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY MANY VARIABLES WILL APPEAR DURING NEXT 10 MONTHS WHICH COULD EASILY FORCE SUCH TIDY PLANS TO GO AGLEY. INTERESTING, HOWEVER, THAT SCENARIO SEEMS SO THOROUGH, AND THAT SIMILAR VERSIONS HAVE APPEARED IN SEVERAL FTB'S. ALSO NOTEWORTHY IS FACT THAT ALTHOUGH SAN IS EXTREMELY FORTHCOMING ON MOST TOPICS, HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN COY WITH ME ON SUBJECT OF RTA INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS. ABOVE CONVERSATION CAME DURING WIND-UP OF EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL KRIT VISIT TO SOUTH WHEN SAN APPEARED MOST ENTHUSED AFTER HAVING MADE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON HIS COMMANDER. (IN ANSWER TO QUESTION REGARDING TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW FOURTH ARMY FOR THE SOUTH AND HIS IMPENDING PROMOTION (SEPTTEL), SAN BEAMED "MY BOSS WILL TAKE CARE OF ME BEFORE HE RETIRES".)

KRIT ALREADY HAS A GOOD BASE FOR SUCH A SCENARIO, SINCE RTA HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN THE BEST ORGANIZED "POLITICAL PARTY" IN THAILAND. AS WELL, HIS THREE DAYS STOMPING AROUND THE BOONDOCKS HERE PAYING INTIMATE ATTENTION TO THE CARES AND WOES OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS OF ALL RANKS -- NOT TO MENTION BANKERS, TEACHERS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS (BUDDHIST AND MUSLIM) AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS -- CERTAINLY DISPLAYED KEEN POLITICAL SKILLS AND THE IMPRESSION THAT THE MAN IS RUNNING FOR SOMETHING OTHER THAN RETIREMENT.

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MASTERS

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